

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. **(Currently Amended)** A thickening composition ~~characterized in that the thickening composition comprises~~ comprising a xanthan gum ~~in which and~~ a potassium salt, wherein said potassium salt is attached to a powder surface of the xanthan gum.
2. **(Currently Amended)** The thickening composition according to claim 1, ~~characterized in that the method of attachment comprises~~ wherein the xanthan gum having a potassium salt attached to a powder surface thereof is prepared by a method comprising the steps of spraying a potassium salt solution to the xanthan gum, and thereafter fluidizing and drying the sprayed xanthan gum.
3. **(Currently Amended)** The thickening composition according to claim 1 ~~or 2, characterized in that,~~ wherein the potassium salt is attached to the xanthan gum, in an amount of 0.5 parts by weight or more and 7 parts by weight or less, based on 100 parts by weight of the xanthan gum.
4. **(Currently Amended)** The thickening composition according to claim 1, ~~characterized in that wherein~~ when the potassium salt-attached xanthan gum ~~as defined in claim 1~~ is added in an amount of 1 part by weight based on 99 parts by weight of ion-exchanged water at 20°C, the xanthan gum is dispersed or dissolved without forming a lumpy mass, to reach 90% or more of a peak viscosity at 2 minutes after the addition.
5. **(Currently Amended)** Foodstuff ~~characterized in that the foodstuff comprise~~ comprising the thickening composition as defined in claim 1.
6. **(New)** The thickening composition according to claim 1, wherein when the thickening composition is applied to a test of vibration on a 60-mesh JIS standard sieve having an inner diameter of 150 mm for 30 seconds under the conditions of vibration width of 2 to 3 mm and

3600 counts/min, fine powder crushed by vibration that passes through the 60-mesh JIS standard sieve is 20% by weight or less of the thickening composition.

7. (New) The thickening composition according to claim 6, wherein the fine powder crushed by vibration is 15% by weight or less of the thickening composition.

8. (New) The thickening composition according to claim 6, wherein the fine powder crushed by vibration is 10% by weight or less of thickening composition.

9. (New) The thickening composition according to claim 1, wherein said potassium salt is one or more potassium salt selected from the group consisting of potassium chloride, monopotassium citrate, tripotassium citrate, potassium DL-hydrogentartrate, potassium L-hydrogentartrate, potassium carbonate, tetrapotassium pyrophosphate, potassium polyphosphate, potassium metaphosphate, tripotassium phosphate, dipotassium hydrogenphosphate, and potassium dihydrogenphosphate.